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ABSTRACT

Changes between 1960 and 1966 in the labor force characteristics of women in low-income rural areas of Alabama, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Tennessee were examined. Within a rural milieu, characterized by low income and high out-migration, the study determined the: (1) scope, social characteristics, and nature of mobility and its effects on the residual female labor force of the initial sample loss from 1960 to 1966; and (2) changes in the patterns of labor force participation, occupational distribution, and mobility of women, and their relation to such variables as age, education, marital status, and stages of the family life cycle. Three to six counties were selected within each state, based primarily on their rurality and low income. Data were obtained from 1,295 households interviewed in 1960 and 838 households in 1966. Among the findings were: (1) one of the most important influences on a woman's employment was her position in the family; (2) for those women who worked, educational attainment and race had more bearing on occupational choice than did family position; and (3) the difference between the labor force participation rate of farm wives and other women decreased considerably between 1960 and 1966. (NQ)

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# Changes in Labor Force Characteristics of Women in Low-Income Rural Areas of the South

By GERALDINE B. TERRY and J. L. CHARLTON

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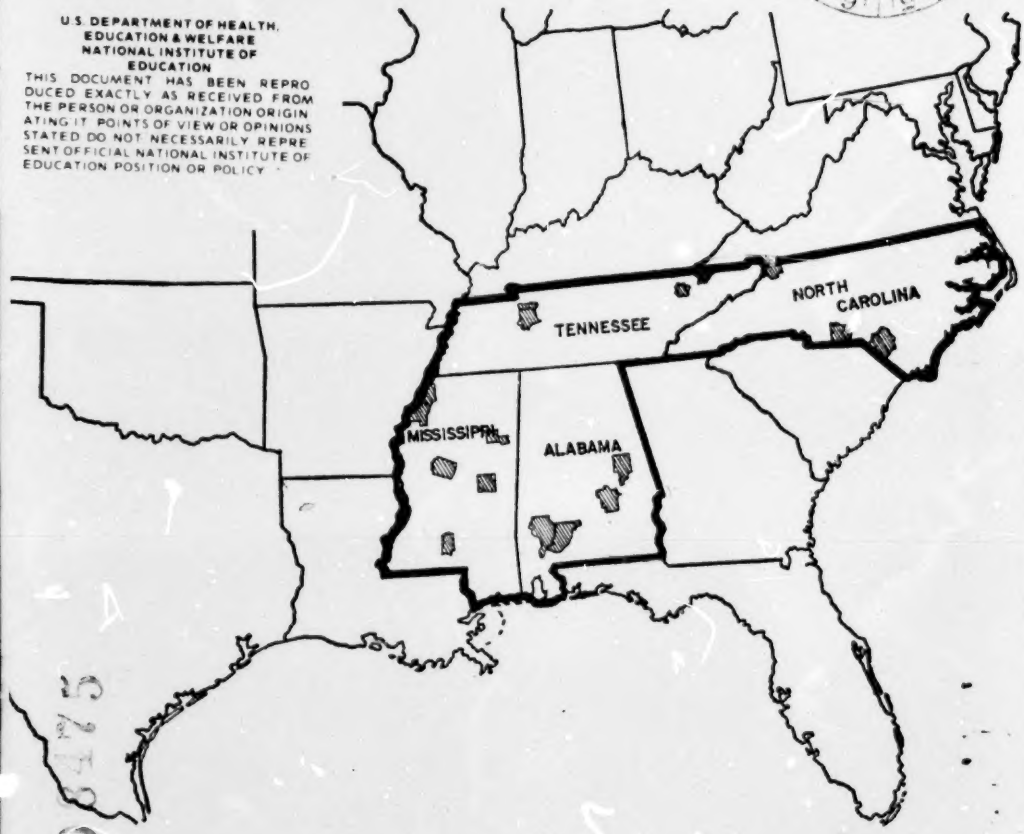


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## PREFACE

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## CONTENTS


| | Page |
|---|---|
| **Introduction** | 5 |
| Method and Procedure | 6 |
| Objectives | 9 |
| **Movement of Women from the Study Area** | 10 |
| Informants Who Died during Period | 11 |
| Women Remaining in Sample Areas but Not Interviewed | 13 |
| Women Who Migrated | 13 |
| **Selected Characteristics of Women Remaining in the Area** | 15 |
| Education, Color and Age | 15 |
| Family Position and Marital Status | 17 |
| Household Composition | 18 |
| Residence | 18 |
| Economic Characteristics | 19 |
| **Work Status of Women as Related to Personal and Household Characteristics** | 22 |
| Work Status and Personal Characteristics | 24 |
| Wife's Work Status and Husband's Characteristics | 28 |
| Work Status and Household Characteristics | 29 |
| Woman's Employment and Socioeconomic Status of Family | 32 |
| **Occupational Distribution of Employed Women as Related to Personal and Household Characteristics** | 35 |
| Occupational Composition | 35 |
| Occupation and Personal Characteristics of Women | 37 |
| Wife's Occupation and Husband's Characteristics | 39 |
| Occupation and Household Characteristics | 42 |
| Occupation and Family Socioeconomic Status | 44 |
| **Summary and Conclusions** | 47 |
| Conclusions | 50 |


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# Changes in Labor Force Characteristics of Women in Low-Income Rural Areas of the South

By GERALDINE B. TERRY and J. L. CHARLTON[1]

Men left the home farm in large numbers to enter the labor market many years earlier than did women, and throughout American history men have formed the majority of the nation's labor force. Since 1940 women have been responsible for the major portion of the growth in the nation's labor force, and their representation has risen from one-fourth in 1940 to about two-fifths today.[2]

In 1971 there were 29.9 million women workers age 16 and over in the United States.[3] The number of female employees appears to be increasing constantly; during 1970 the increase amounted to over half a million women workers. Forty-three percent of all women age 16 and over, and a majority of all women in the years of 18 to 64, were in the civilian labor force during 1971. These women contribute substantially to the nation's economy.

The growing contribution made by women to the labor force has developed as a result of many social and economic changes in the last 25 years. Since shortly after the turn of the century, nonfarm work has increased and farm work has declined. By the middle of this century, large numbers of people were no longer needed to till the soil; mechanical farm production had reached such magnitude that great numbers of rural workers necessarily sought industrial employment and other types of nonfarm occupations for their livelihood.

Reduction of a woman's opportunity to perform significant labor on the family farm is not the only contributing factor. Scientific and technological advances have simplified home chores, so that time for outside work is substantially more today than

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[1] Dr. Terry, sociologist, was at Arkansas Polytechnic College while writing this summary. Dr. Charlton is rural sociologist, emeritus, Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station. Data for the report were supplied through Southern Regional Projects S-44 and S-61.

[2] Data based on 1971 annual averages, as reported by the Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor, January, 1972.

[3] Ibid.

in past years. Also, the period of maximum freedom for the mature woman—that time when the family unit is reduced to the original pair after the rearing of offspring—comes at an earlier age because, among other things, of a reduction of family size. This period of maximum availability also extends to a later date due to the increased life expectancy of females.

Although more women than ever need and desire employment outside the home and family farm, the availability of jobs is essential if this potential is to be utilized. The growth of new industries in a dynamic economy, as well as expanded activities in existing industries, have created many job opportunities for women; however, these opportunities vary considerably from area to area.

Socio-psychological changes also are related to the changes in work patterns and these changes have not occurred uniformly in our nation's value system. New ideas and values, as well as new technological inventions, generally reach the rural areas last, and are most slowly incorporated into the rural social pattern. A traditional rural value is that the woman's place is "in the home," and the fact that rural women do not participate in the work force to the same extent as do urban women must in some measure be attributed to prevailing traditional values in rural areas.

Also, more poverty exists proportionately in rural America than in our cities, and this indicates a relative lack of employment opportunity in rural areas. One person in eight is poor in metropolitan areas, and one in 15 in the nation's suburbs. The ratio is one in four in rural areas. Job opportunities in rural areas are scarce, especially for female job seekers. What is more, the President's Report on Rural Poverty states that job opportunities are getting scarcer in rural America.[4]

Many of the rural poor have moved to the city in hope of getting jobs and living decently. Some have found jobs, yet many have not. For many, the transition resulted in a disappointing exchange of life in a rural slum to life in an urban slum at exorbitant cost to themselves, the cities, and rural America.[5]

## Method and Procedure

The principal source of data for this study resulted from family interviewing by professional field workers. The interview

[4] The U. S. President's National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty, "The People Left Behind," Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., 1967, p. 3.
[5] Ibid.

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schedule was applied in 7 southern states in 1960, yielding 1,908 usable household records. It was followed by application of the schedule to the same sample in 4 of the states in 1966, yielding 1,295 household records.

The 1960 sampling proceeded in two stages: selection of counties within the states and selection of representative families within the counties' rural population. From three to six counties were selected within a state, based primarily on the criteria of rurality and low income.

The rural parts of the selected counties are remote from large urban places. Of the 17 counties in the 4-state sample of 1960 and 1966, only one contained a large urban center and three had census city counts in 1960 of 21, 15, and 31 thousand persons. Six counties contained no place above 2,500, and the remaining seven counties had a center with a population between 2,500 and 5,000. Approximately half of the rural population and of the sample households resided on farms.

**Table 1. Comparison of Base Sample Population with Nation, and with States and Counties from Which Drawn, 1960[1]**

| Item | | United States | Four states | Seventeen counties | Sample population[2] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Net family income, median | | | | | |
| Entire area | Dollars | 5,660 | 3,797 | 3,017 | .... |
| Rural | Dollars | 4,377 | 2,967 | 1,980 | 1,439 |
| Nonfarm | Dollars | 4,750 | 3,347 | 2,306 | 1,497 |
| Farm | Dollars | 3,228 | 2,202 | 1,686 | 1,383 |
| Population | | | | | |
| Rural, of total | Percent | 30.1 | 58.0 | 57.9 | .... |
| Nonfarm, of rural | Percent | 75.1 | 67.9 | 42.2 | 54.3 |
| Farm, of rural | Percent | 24.9 | 32.1 | 57.8 | 45.7 |
| Population, Nonwhite | Percent | 11.4 | 29.0 | 44.6 | .... |
| Rural | Percent | 10.4 | 26.3 | 51.4 | 32.8 |
| Nonfarm | Percent | 10.0 | 23.0 | 48.5 | 36.6 |
| Farm | Percent | 11.8 | 33.2 | 55.4 | 28.3 |
| Rural families by marital status of head | | | | | |
| Married male, wife present | Percent | 90.4 | 87.8 | .... | 77.6 |
| Married male, no wife | Percent | 1.9 | 2.1 | .... | 5.4 |
| Married female, no husband | Percent | 6.2 | 8.5 | .... | 14.3 |
| Single male | Percent | 1.0 | 0.8 | .... | 1.8 |
| Single female | Percent | 0.6 | 0.8 | .... | 0.8 |
| Employment and occupation of rural women | | | | | |
| Employed, 14 years of age and over | Percent | 25.7 | 28.0 | 27.1 | 31.2 |
| Occupation group | | | | | |
| Proprietors, professional, and technical workers | Percent | 19.3 | 16.4 | 18.1 | 15.0 |
| Sales and clerical workers | Percent | 29.4 | 21.5 | 14.0 | 8.6 |
| Operatives and craftsmen | Percent | 20.5 | 30.7 | 23.2 | 25.1 |
| Laborers | Percent | 30.8 | 31.4 | 44.7 | 51.3 |

[1] Sources are reports of the United States Bureau of the Census. The four states are Alabama, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Tennessee. A criterion applied in selecting the rural sample population was low income.

[2] Covered are 1,295 total, or 1,216 households with a homemaker or female head. The "not reported" cases excluded from the percentages did not exceed 4 percent of the base sample for any item.

The criterion of low income was met in choosing counties within the state and sampling households within the rural counties. The median income in 1960 of the sample households in the 4 states was only 73 percent of the median rural income for the 17 counties and 48 percent of the median rural income of the 4 states from which the counties were selected. The median income of rural families of the 4 states was 68 percent of the comparable income of the nation (Table 1).

Other criteria were that the sample households within the selected counties would be of adequate number to provide analytical reports for each state, and that state samples would be additive and, in combination, adequate for special reports and analysis of detail characteristics.

Although a high rate of out-migration was not employed as a criterion for the selection of rural low-income counties, it is concomitant of low income and particularly phenomenal of the rural farm population. During the 1960's, net out-migration of the rural part of the 17 counties varied widely among the counties, but for all it is estimated to have exceeded 2 percent per annum of the base 1960 population. The residual population is expected to be characterized by small households containing disproportionate numbers of aged and dependents, and relatively few labor force participants.

The 1966 sample was intended to be longitudinal, and as many heads of households and homemakers who were interviewed in 1960 as could feasibly be found were reinterviewed. The sample now was limited to 4 states because 3 of the 7 states in the S-44 regional project did not continue in the follow-up phases of the S-61 succeeding project.

Since the sampling was coordinated among the states and each state applied similar criteria, the socio-economic values in the 4-state sample conform rather closely to the values for the 7 states. In the 1960 base period the median household income was somewhat lower in the 4-state sample, and there were proportionately more nonwhite households (Table 2). The state with the largest nonwhite component in 1960 was included in the 1966 resurvey, and this may account for the somewhat larger proportion of families of low income in the 4-state sample.

The size of the 1960 household sample (1,908) permitted a number of special studies to be derived from the data. Terry and Bertrand reported on the labor force characteristics of women, using records for 1,781 households in which a homemaker or

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**Table 2. Households in the Base Sample Population in Four States of Restudy, Compared with Those in Seven Original States, 1960**

| Item | | Seven states | Four states |
|---|---|---|---|
| All households | Number | 1,908 | 1,295 |
| Persons in households, median | Number | 3.4 | 3.4 |
| Intact families, husband and wife pre[illegible] | Percent | 78.6 | 77.3 |
| Households with female head | Percent | 16.3 | 16.5 |
| Nonwhite families in sample population | Percent | 26.9 | 32.8 |
| Rural households residing on farm | Percent | 51.7 | 45.7 |
| Family income, median | Dollars | 1,537 | 1,439 |
| Homemaker or female head of family | Number | 1,782 | 1,216 |
| Years of age, median | Number | 47.3 | 47.3 |
| School grade completed, median | Number | 8.4 | 8.4 |
| Work status | | | |
| Employed | Percent | 27.6 | 31.2 |
| Homemaking | Percent | 53.2 | 52.0 |
| Disabled or retired | Percent | 19.3 | 16.8 |
| Occupation group | | | |
| Proprietors, professional, and technical workers | Percent | 15.7 | 15.0 |
| Sales and clerical workers | Percent | 9.0 | 8.6 |
| Operatives and craftsmen | Percent | 22.6 | 25.1 |
| Laborers | Percent | 52.7 | 51.3 |
| Work income during year, median | Dollars | 870 | 863 |

female head was present.[6] The 4-state resurvey of 1966 provided the basis for a follow-up of the female labor force participation study, analyzing changes which occurred during the 6 years in the work status and occupational distribution of these women. Among the 1,295 usable household records of the 4-state follow-up, 838 matched households with a homemaker or female head constitute a core for studying changes in female work status.

Where possible, information was obtained from relatives and acquaintances about the current 1966 status of the 457 households not accessible to field interviewers in 1966. Full information about them was carried in the 1960 household records. Those who had departed beyond access or otherwise could not be interviewed were the counterpart of those who remained, and the data collected for them in 1960 stands as evidence of the selective nature of socio-economic mobility and of natural attrition during a 6-year passage of time.

## Objectives

Within this rural milieu, characterized by low income and high out-migration, the objectives of the study were:

To determine the scope, social characteristics, and nature of mobility and effects on the residual female labor force of that part of the base sample population that was lost in the 1966 resurvey;

[6] Geraldine B. Terry and Alvin L. Bertrand, "The Labor Force Characteristics of Women in Low-Income Rural Areas of the South," So. Coop. Series Bul. 116, 1966.

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To determine the changes in the patterns of labor-force participation, occupational distribution, and mobility of women, and how these are related to such variables as age, education, marital status, and stages of the family life cycle.

## MOVEMENT OF WOMEN FROM THE STUDY AREA

Six years after the base study, nearly one-third of the homemakers and female heads of households had been lost to the sample population, and most were therewith removed from possible employment or work force in the original study areas. The scope of this exit, socioeconomic characteristics of the women and the households of which they were members, and effects of the attrition on the female labor market are the subjects of this section. The same detailed information was obtained for 1960 for the attrition cases as for those retained in the 1966 restudy, and it permits analysis of those lost to the sample.

Among the sample of 1,295 households in 4 states in 1960 were 79 households for which no record was obtained from a homemaker. In 70 of these cases the homemaker was reported absent and no longer a member of a household, either through death or other reasons. The other 9 women were indicated as members of the household, but they had refused the interview or were never found at home. These households are outside the consideration of this report since no homemaker records could be obtained for either 1960 or 1966.

This leaves 1,216 households with a reporting homemaker or female head. By 1966, 378 could not be interviewed, an attrition rate of 31 percent. The majority represent departure from the sample areas and from feasible contact of the field interviewers (Table 3). Thirty-three percent of the attrition cases were reported in the 1966 resurvey as moved, and 25 percent as no information. The latter in most cases had moved, but information about them was not obtained or not obtainable in the locations in which the interviews occurred in 1960.

The 18 percent reduction through movement from the sample areas during the 6-year period is consistent with the high rate of net out-migration of the total rural population of the counties studied. The estimated excess of out-migration over in-migration exceeds 12 percent for these 17 counties.

Of next rank in loss to the sample were women who had not moved and could remain a part of the female work force.

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**Table 3. Households of 1960 Sample Retained or Lost in 1966 Restudy of Employment of Women**

| Item | Households |
|---|---|
| | *Number* |
| Sample households, 1960 | 1,295 |
| Households with a homemaker or female head, retained in 1966 | 838 |
| Households not retained in 1966 sample | 457 |
| Reasons for exclusion | |
| No homemaker interview in 1960 | 79[1] |
| No homemaker or female head recorded in 1966 | 378 |
| Homemaker deceased | 55 |
| Homemaker in sample area but not interviewed | 105 |
| Refused to be interviewed | 36 |
| Not found at home | 38 |
| Other | 31[2] |
| Homemaker had left sample areas | 218 |
| Reported as moved | 124 |
| No information | 94[3] |

[1] The homemaker was reported as absent from the household in 70 cases because of death or other separation from the household before 1960.

[2] Includes 14 cases of divorce or separation, 6 of incapacitation, and 11 not specified.

[3] If no information could be obtained in 1966 about homemakers or households included in the 1960 sample, it is assumed that they had moved.

They refused to be interviewed or were not found at home during successive calls by the interviewers.

Death is another important source of loss from female informants of 1960. The 55 reported deaths during the 6 years amount to 4.5 percent of the 1,216 women interviewed in 1960.

## Informants Who Died during Period

Natural attrition may be considered a normal and expected occurrence, but the rate of attrition appears higher than generally prevailing in rural areas of the nation. The 55 deaths gives a rate of 7.5 deaths per 1,000 of the mid-year population of each year. Considering probable unreported deaths among women in the households that had moved, it appears that the full rate would exceed that characterizing the rural population of the nation.

Another and more definite indicator of relative attrition is the average age at death. The median age of the decedents was 68 years in 1960 or about 70 years at the time of death, 3 or 4 years below the life expectancy of all rural women of comparable age. Aspects of the higher mortality rate among these female household heads and homemakers may be the disproportionate prevalence of (a) nonwhites, (b) households of low income, and

0012

(c) households headed by widows of the advanced median age of 62 years in 1960.

Death of women had minor effect on the female labor force in the areas. The number of decedents comprised only 4.5 percent of the 1,216 homemakers and female heads of families in the 1960 sample population. Only 18 percent of the decedents had been employed in 1960, and of these only 30 percent were employed above the level of unskilled laborers (Table 4). The median annual earnings of $375 indicate low return and surely sporadic employment during the base year.

**Table 4. Comparison of Homemakers or Female Household Heads Lost with Those Retained in the Sample, 1960**

| Attribute in 1960 | | Homemakers or female heads not reinterviewed | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | All lost to sample | Deceased | Moved | Still present in areas | All retained in sample |
| Households with female head or homemaker | No. | 378 | 55 | 218 | 105 | 838 |
| Persons in household, median | No. | 3.24 | 2.50 | 3.50 | 3.24 | 3.59 |
| Intact families | % | 81.7 | 63.6 | 83.9 | 86.7 | 84.2 |
| Nonwhite households | % | 43.1 | 52.7 | 46.8 | 30.5 | 27.2 |
| Households residing on farm | % | 33.6 | 35.2 | 28 3 | 43.3 | 51.9 |
| Family income for year, median | $ | 1,398 | 863 | 1,452 | 1,771 | 1,533 |
| Material level of living scores, median | No. | 2.63 | 2.09 | 2.55 | 3.44 | 3.63 |
| Communication level of living scores, median | No. | 3.21 | 2.38 | 3.25 | 3.02 | 3.44 |
| Homemaker or female head of family | | | | | | |
| Years of age, median | No. | 47.9 | 67.9 | 43.9 | 48.7 | 46.7 |
| School grades completed, median | No. | 8.30 | 6.10 | 8.41 | 8.93 | 8.45 |
| Work status | | | | | | |
| Employed | % | 31.3 | 18.5 | 33.0 | 35.6 | 31.0 |
| Homemaking | % | 43.6 | 18.5 | 51.6 | 40.6 | 55.6 |
| Disabled or retired | % | 25.1 | 63.0 | 15.4 | 23.8 | 13.4 |
| Occupation group | | | | | | |
| Proprietors, professional, and technical workers | % | 12.0 | 10.0 | 11.3 | 13.9 | 16.3 |
| Sales and clerical workers | % | 6.8 | 0 | 4.2 | 13.9 | 3.3 |
| Operatives and craftsmen | % | 23.1 | 20.0 | 25.3 | 19.4 | 26.1 |
| Laborers | % | 58.1 | 70.0 | 59.2 | 52.8 | 48.3 |
| Work income of employed, median | $ | 713 | 375 | 775 | 714 | 950 |

The 1960 data show several distinctive household characteristics of those who were lost through death. The women had a median age of 68 years in 1960 compared to medians of 44 years for women who had moved and 49 years for those who remained in the sample population. The deceased were disproportionately nonwhite (53 percent), although nonwhite households comprised

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only 33 percent of the overall 1960 sample population. In 1960, 36 percent of the decedents' households were already broken due to the absence of the husband or male head, compared to 16 percent of broken households for those lost through migration. The prevalence of small broken families (median size of 1.5 persons) contributed to the small household size characteristic of women known to have died during the period.

## Women Remaining in Sample Areas but Not Interviewed

Approximately one-fourth of the women who could not be interviewed in 1966 were indicated as still in the sample areas and within the potential or actual work force. Most were in the same households and reported as "refused to be interviewed" or "never found at home." Some others who were separated from the 1960 households may have remained within the sample areas.

The socioeconomic characteristics of such women are, in several aspects, more similar to the characteristics of the 838 women interviewed in both 1960 and 1966 than to characteristics of the non-interviewees who had departed. The 1960 employment rates were 36 percent for nonmigrant women not interviewed, compared to 31 percent for the 838 women interviewed at both dates (Table 4). Occupations of proprietor-professional-technical level were followed by similar fractions of both groups (14 and 16 percent, respectively), while about 50 percent of both groups were laborers. Those respondents remaining but not interviewed had lower employment income for the base year but higher median household income than those interviewed at both dates.

The characteristics of the households with homemakers remaining also were quite similar in respect to family intactness, percent of nonwhite households, and indicators of the material level of living. The median age of women in the two groups was practically the same, and both groups had completed between eight and nine years of schooling. Relatively more households retained in the 1966 sample resided on farms.

## Women Who Migrated

The women of this group represent mainly movement from the sample areas and from the local work force. The number comprises 18 percent of the homemakers and female heads of the 1960 sample population and 57 percent of those who were not reinterviewed. The 3 percent annual out-migration of the women

during the 6 years is not inconsistent with the estimated 2 percent net migration from rural parts of the counties from which the sample is drawn, and both are typical of the high rates of out-migration generally prevailing in the low-income rural areas of the southern states.[7]

Homemakers and female heads of households who migrated had an employment rate close to that of those who remained in the sample areas (Table 4). However, a lower percentage were proprietors, professional, and technical workers, and a significantly larger proportion were laborers. Despite their lower occupational levels, their annual earnings were about the same as for those who remained in the sample areas but were not reinterviewed, but significantly lower than for the women who were interviewed at both periods. Considering that only a third of the women were gainfully employed, difference in earnings was not the main element in the lower household income of those who migrated.

The most significant difference between the movers and nonmovers is the high rate of out-migration of the nonwhite segment of the population, with their relatively low income and low material consumption. Although nonwhites comprised only 32 percent of the 1960 population, nearly 50 percent of those who left the sample areas and local work force were nonwhite.

Forty-seven percent of the nonwhite households who migrated had a rural nonfarm residence in 1960, compared with less than 30 percent of all who remained in the local work force. The prominence of domestic and farm laborers among nonwhite women residing in the nonfarm areas suggests that this status represents a temporary or transitional stage between the farm and the future primarily urban residence.

The female work force was affected not only by quantity migration, but by selection in the process. Of the women in primary family positions, those who migrated tended to be younger (45 percent were less than 40 years). Migrants had less schooling than the remaining women, with 44 percent having completed less than 7 grades. While this appears contrary to the educational pattern generally reported for migrants, it is not, since the frame of reference is all migrant individuals, whereas the present study focuses on women occupying the position of wife or head of household. The usual pattern of "children" breaking away from the parental family is evident in the study

[7] The migrating rates are not strictly comparable because the net migration rate is based on persons rather than households, and includes arrivals as well as departures from the rural part of the counties. The gross out-migration is based on households, and would be higher still if based on individuals since the size of the family also declined as individuals broke away from the parental family during the six years.

population inasmuch as there is a drop in the size of household between 1960 and 1966. This decreasing household size indicates that individuals have migrated in greater numbers than have women in the primary family positions, and than entire households.

There is some evidence that the economic "push" factor may have been more prevalent among the women of migrating households than among the nonmigrant. Among the one-third of the migrants who were employed in 1960, only 15 percent held "white collar" occupations, compared with 28 and 26 percent of those who remained in the work force of the sample areas. The median material level-of-living scores had a value for the base year of 2.55, compared to 3.50 for the nonmigrant households.

## SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN REMAINING IN THE AREA

A knowledge of the characteristics of the study population is basic to understanding the socio-cultural variables affecting female labor force participation within the group. Therefore this general description of the 838 women available for study in both 1960 and 1966, and of the households in which they occupied a primary position, precedes the analysis by work status.

### Education, Color, and Age

Relatively low educational attainment characterized women in the rural low income areas a decade ago. The median years of school completed by those reporting was 8.5 years (Table 4), whereas the educational attainment for women in the nation (age 25 and over) was 10.9 school years in 1960[8] and had risen to 12.0[9] by the middle of the decade. The additional schooling in the general population was primarily attained by young people; very few older rural people continued their education beyond the point they had attained by the first interview. Only 3 percent of the matched households in this study had a different female head or homemaker in 1966, and as expected the median school grades completed by all the women did not advance appreciably during the period.

[8] U. S. Bureau of the Census, "1960 Census of Population, Social and Economic Characteristics, U. S. Summary," Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., 1962, Table 76, p. 207.

[9] U. S. Bureau of the Census, "Statistical Abstract of the U. S. 1966," Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., 1967, Table 156, p. 114.

The median educational attainment for all rural women in the nation (age 25 and over) was 9.8 years in 1960;[10] that is, rural women generally had about a year less education than the general female population, but a year more schooling than women in these rural low-income areas. It has been said that rural low-income areas are "the most rural of rural America,"[11] and the educational pattern observed concurs with that description.

Within the 838 households in which women held, on both dates of interview, the primary position of either household head or homemaker, there was a ratio of slightly more than three white to each nonwhite household (Table 4). Although the entire sample was designed to represent rural low-income areas, the data reveal that the nonwhite households were poorer (median of $1,155 total family income) than white households (median of $2,759 total income).

**Table 5. Personal and Household Characteristics of Women in Low-Income Rural Areas, 1966 and 1960**

| Item | | 1966 | 1960 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Households in matched sample population | Number | 838 | 838 |
| Persons in household, median | Number | 2.9 | 3.6 |
| With female head, median | Number | 2.0 | 2.4 |
| With male head, median | Number | 3.1 | 3.8 |
| Households residing, on farm | Percent | 41.3 | 51.9 |
| Family income, median | Dollars | 2,063 | 1,533 |
| Material level of living scale score, median | Number | 5.2 | 3.6 |
| Communications level of living scale score, median | Number | 3.9 | 3.4 |
| Homemaker or female head of household | | | |
| Years of age, median | Number | 52.7 | 46.7 |
| 65 years of age and over | Percent | 19.4 | 11.5 |
| Marital status | | | |
| Married | Percent | 76.3 | 83.2 |
| Divorced or separated | Percent | 3.2 | 3.6 |
| Widowed | Percent | 19.0 | 11.9 |
| Single | Percent | 1.4 | 1.3 |
| Work status | | | |
| Employed | Percent | 27.8 | 31.0 |
| Homemaking | Percent | 47.0 | 55.6 |
| Disabled or retired | Percent | 25.2 | 13.4 |
| Occupation group | | | |
| Proprietors, professional, and technical workers | Percent | 13.2 | 16.3 |
| Sales and clerical workers | Percent | 11.5 | 9.3 |
| Operatives and craftsmen | Percent | 34.8 | 26.1 |
| Laborers | Percent | 40.5 | 48.3 |

The median age of women in the sample population was 46.7 in 1960, and had, of course, risen by 6 years at the time of the second interview (Table 5). Poor education and advancing age are among the most conspicuous and significant characteristics of adults in such areas.

[10] "1960 Census of Population," op. cit., Table 76, p. 207.
[11] Harold K. Kaufman, "Rural Families with Low Incomes: Problems of Adjustment," Sociology and Rural Life Series No. 9, Miss. Agr. Expt. Sta., Feb., 1957.

## Family Position and Marital Status

The vast majority of the women studied were classified as married and had their husband present as the head of the family (Table 5). However, the number of homes in which the husband was disabled or retired was sufficient to reduce to a very slim majority (51.3 percent in 1966, 60.1 percent in 1960) the proportion which contained a male head fully able to work. One would anticipate that a sample of population which had such a small percentage of male heads physically capable of full and regular employment would be economically poor by national criteria. One might infer also that many of the potentially productive men were poorly educated and had meager work skills.

Terry and Bertrand[12] reported that few married women in rural low-income areas of the South classified themselves as family heads. Usually when the woman was reported as head of the household no husband was present. In 1966 only two cases were reported in which a wife considered herself to be the head of the household. In both, the husband had been completely disabled for a long time.

On the other hand there are also exceptions in which no husband is present and the woman is considered to be the homemaker but not head. In three of the four such cases reported for 1966, the homemaker lived with relatives—a widowed father, an unmarried brother, a daughter's family; in the fourth, a woman without a spouse served as housekeeper for an elderly dependent and was considered the homemaker.

Within the areas studied an unusually large percentage of the women were heads of households, increasing from 16 percent in 1960 to 23 percent in 1966. Nationally only 10 percent of households have female heads.[13] Female heads within the rural low-income sample are like other female heads in that they are more prone (than are wives) to work during the normal working years, but they differ inasmuch as those in rural low-income areas are disproportionately disabled or elderly.[14]

Women who carried the primary responsibility for a household were more often widowed than of any other marital status. Since the longitudinal study concerns rural households of advancing age, and since mortality rates are higher for men than for women, it is reasonable that the percentage of widowed female

[12] Terry and Bertrand, op. cit., p. 11.
[13] "1965 Handbook on Women Workers," U. S. Dept. of Labor, Women's Bureau Bul. 290, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., 1966, p. 24.
[14] "1965 Handbook on Women Workers," op. cit., p. 25.

heads would increase between 1960 and 1966, from 12 percent of all households to 19 percent (Table 5).

## Household Composition

The average household contained three people in 1966 whereas it had contained four people earlier (Table 5). Married women living with husbands resided more often in households of two persons (37 percent) than of any other number, whereas women occupying the position of household head more often resided alone (37 percent) than with any specific number of individuals. Overall the difference in household size between homes in which women occupied the role of wife and those in which they were the household head appears to be accounted for by the presence of a husband; that is, the difference in the median number was about one person at each date.

Two out of every three households were simple nuclear families (with or without unmarried children). An additional 18 percent of the study population lived in incomplete nuclear units in which no outside individuals resided. The remainder consisted of households in which relatives or other individuals were included in the home. In rare cases, a single household had four generations living together.

When nuclear families were classified by stage in the family cycle, the later stages were over-represented in both years. A very small number of the married women were young and childless (2 percent) or had children the eldest of whom was no more than three years old (1 percent of nuclear families). This same pattern characterized the original study population for the larger 7-state area.[15]

When those households without a male partner were analyzed, again an over-representation of the later stages was evident. Only 2 of these 196 female household heads were under 35 and had no children in the home in 1960. The partnerless mothers who had one or more children under age 17 residing with them accounted for only one-tenth of these household units.

## Residence

The sample was composed entirely of rural residents when the study originated. At that time, the majority of the women reporting resided on rural farms (Table 5).

Since the purpose of the study was longitudinal, individuals

[15] Terry and Bertrand, op. cit., p. 11.

0019

and households in the original sample were followed in migration to other rural areas and to urban locations as well. At the second interview, a majority reported rural nonfarm residences, a sizable minority were on rural farms, and the remaining 3 percent had urban residences.

It seems appropriate to caution the reader against generalizing from the small portion of rural low-income Southern households reported as migrating to urban areas between 1960 and 1966. While diligent effort was made to follow up families who moved during the interval, attrition that was not due to death of the respondents was almost without exception due to mobility. If it had been possible to locate each of the original households, the percentage of urban residents within the larger number of respondents would undoubtedly have been higher.

Four-fifths of the 838 households studied were still residing in the same house in which they had been interviewed six years earlier. An additional 12 percent of those reinterviewed had not left the county in which the original interview took place, although the family was residing in a different house. Five percent of the women whose families were reinterviewed had moved outside the county, but most were still located in the same state (1 percent were reported having moved to another state). This does not include over 200 households with a woman present in 1960, who were not located and are assumed to have moved beyond access to the field workers (Table 4).

One would hypothesize that those who had moved out of the county would be the most difficult to locate and reinterview, with the difficulty highest for the farthest moves. The small percentage of the women interviewed at both periods who were described as migrants out of the immediate area is therefore assumed to be an under-representation of the original sample.

## Economic Characteristics

The reported family income of all respondents was relatively low, as would be expected from the nature of the study. Figure 1 shows just how low compared to the nation. A word of caution here is advisable. Whether a given family considers itself "low-income" depends upon the levels and standards of the community or sub-culture of which it is a part.[16] In addition, non-monetary items such as garden produce frequently supplement monetary income in rural areas. For these reasons, direct comparison of rural low-income families with a nation of predominantly urban

[16] Kaufman, loc. cit.

0020

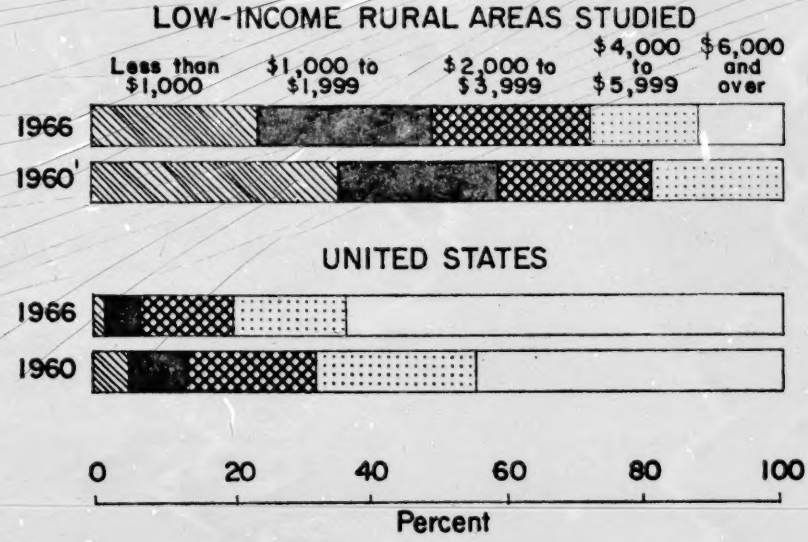


**Figure 1. Family Income in the Low-Income Rural Areas and the United States, 1966 and 1960**

[1] For the sample households in 1960, the high end category is $4,000 and over.

Source of data: 740 of the households reported their income in 1966 and 816 reported it in 1960. The national data are from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Current Population Statistics (Series P60, No. 52)."

families having greater monetary income must be made with reservation.

The median income for the 838 families reporting was $2,063 in 1966 (Table 5). The net increase in median income during the 6 years was $530, or 34.6 percent. However, during the interval the cost of living increased about 10.5 percent,[17] indicating that the gain in purchasing power was actually about 20 percent.

This median income of $2,063 represents the combined farm and non-farm earnings of the family members, as well as income from all other sources such as welfare payments, retirement income, worker's benefits, veteran's benefits, and fixed income from real estate or securities.

Families with male heads averaged $4,476 in 1966, but households with female heads averaged only $967 total family income. A part of the difference in median family income may be ac-

[17] U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Consumer Price Index," Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., April, 1969.

counted for by differences in the head's ability to work. Whereas only about one-third of the female heads were fully able to work, about two-thirds of the male heads were so able. Rural low-income families with female heads were the poorest households in the sample; as a group they ranked below the nonwhite families in total family earnings.

The interview schedule included 26 indicators of level of living. Several different scaling approaches have been used to arrive at various level-of-living scales. The Guttman-type scales used in this analysis were developed by Cleland, McCann, and Moon.[18]

The Material Level-of-Living Scale and Communications Level-of-Living Scale had been developed in such a way that they would have "external validity."[19] Education, which is frequently used as an indicator of social class position, was used as an external criterion, thereby assuring a "built-in" relationship between this measure of socioeconomic status and others.

The items included in the Material Possessions Scale are vacuum cleaner, bath or shower, water piped into home, kitchen sink, gas or electric range, and mechanical refrigerator. While the median score was 3.6 in 1960, it had risen to 5.2 by 1966 (Table 5). The percent of households containing none of the six items had been reduced by more than half (from 88 to 43), and the number of households containing all six had almost doubled (from 149 to 296). When the scales of the two dates were cross-tabulated, 305 households showed slight advances and another 106 showed exceptional advances during the 6 years. However, 17 extreme, and 28 slight, cases of regression were evident in the cross tabulation.

In spite of the low material level-of-living scores for households with a female head (median of 2.2; intact families, 4.1), the number of households whose scores decreased during the 6 years is more than for intact families, 13 percent compared with 4 percent. For a majority of broken families these scores fell from the already low scores of 3 or less in 1960. The gains for the two types of households were 45 percent for those with female head and 50 percent for those with male head of household and homemaker.

Broken families had made much less headway in material improvements involving some alteration of the house, such as

[18] Charles L. Cleland, Glenn C. McCann, and Seung Gyu Moon, "Two Level-of-Living Scales for Southern Rural Households," The Korean Jour. Sociology, Vol. 2. 1966, pp. 101-109.

[19] Charles L. Cleland, ed., "Scaling Social Data," So. Coop. Series Bul. 108, December, 1965, pp. 17-29.

0022

the installation of a kitchen sink, pipes for water, and bathing facilities, or moving to another house to acquire these facilities. Of households without running water in 1960, 26 percent with a female head acquired them during the 6-year period, compared with 40 percent of intact households.

The question arises as to how frequently improvements in the so-called material level of living accompany households moving or changing dwellings. During the 6-year period, 63 percent of households who moved and 47 percent of households occupying the same dwelling in both years realized improvements in the material levels. Only 5 percent of the moves were accompanied by reduction in the level of living. The material improvement that most frequently accompanied the move involved gaining access to running water in the dwelling.

The items included in the Communications Level-of-Living Scale were radio, television, automobile, daily newspaper, telephone, and magazine subscription. Median scores on the two Level-of-Living scales were similar in 1960. Although the rise in the Communications Scale was less pronounced (Table 5) than the rise in the Material Scale, the possession of communication facilities increased at each point along the scale, and the households possessing none of the items were reduced considerably. Again, cross-tabulation revealed a small number of regressions (57 exceptional and 57 more slight), and a large number of advances (121 exceptional and 284 slight). The implication is that whereas some households were even less fortunate than they had been in 1960, households were generally "holding their own" even in the face of inflation, or were improving economically.

## WORK STATUS OF WOMEN AS RELATED TO PERSONAL AND HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

This section relates work status of women to such factors as her age and education and that of her husband, employment of husband and other members of the household, income and material level-of-living scores, and stage of the life cycle and the intact-broken status of the family.

The work status classification is based on the response of each woman when asked to state her ability to work—whether she was fully able to work, partially or totally disabled, or retired —or, if employed during the 12 months preceding the interview, the kind of work she did. Answers were categorized into em-

0023

**Table 6. Change in Work Status of Women in Low-Income Rural Areas, 1960 to 1966**

| Work status | Women in same households | | | | Women in full sample | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1966 | | 1960 | | 1960 | |
| | *Number* | *Percent* | *Number* | *Percent* | *Number* | *Percent* |
| All women | 838 | 100.0 | 838 | 100.0 | 1,216 | 100.0 |
| Employed | 227 | 27.1 | 257 | 30.7 | 374 | 30.7 |
| Homemaking | 384 | 45.8 | 461 | 55.0 | 624 | 51.3 |
| Diabled or retired | 206 | 24.6 | 111 | 13.2 | 205 | 16.9 |
| Not reported | 21 | 2.5 | 9 | 1.1 | 13 | 1.1 |

ployed, homemaking (not gainfully employed during the year), and disabled or retired.

### Employed

The employed category is comprised of the women who reported their occupation and worked gainfully a part of the year or were fully employed.

Thirty-one percent of the women were employed in 1960; 6 years later 27 percent were employed (Table 6). The women under 65 years of age in 1960, and the reduced number under 65 in 1966, had almost identical rates of employment. Those who were considered able to work (all women minus those disabled or retired), who also were mainly under 65 years old, also had nearly identical rates of employment.

The amount of work during the years was not reported, but the prevalence of much **under** employment is indicated by the low earnings of employed women (in 1960, 21 percent less than $250, 34 percent less than $500, and 45 percent less than $750). The unemployed, that is, women who were not working gainfully at the time of the interview and were actively seeking employment, were not ascertained. The women categorized as homemaking, with no paid employment during the year, did not consider themselves in the labor market.

### Homemaking

Homemaking in the work-status classification is residual and represents women who were not retired, disabled, or employed. It applies to ages under 65 years, since all women over 65 originally considered as homemakers were transferred to the retired category. The decrease in number from 461 to 384 again primarily represents aging; the proportionate decrease in percent of women

under 65 years who were homemaking (63 in 1960 and 59 in 1966) is hardly statistically significant.

### Disabled and Retired

During the 6 years the proportion of the sample population who were disabled or retired advanced from 13 percent to 25 percent. This was mainly due to the increase in the number of women over 65 years of age, from 12 to 20 percent, and their classification as retired if not reported as disabled or employed.

For 1960 all women 65 years and older not reported as disabled (24 percent) or employed (18 percent) were considered retired; therefore, 58 percent. For 1966, 77 percent were considered retired, with 20 percent disabled, and 3 percent employed.

For ages under 65 years the retirees and disabled were minor components, retirees comprising 3 percent of the women in 1960 and 5 percent in 1966; the disabled, 1 percent in 1960 and 3 percent in 1966. The employed comprised about one-third of the women at each year, with the homemakers—not employed but able to work—numbering 6 of 10 of the younger women.

Women who were disabled or retired were almost all "ineligible" for the labor force due to their age or health; however, a few able-bodied women less than 65, generally married to men a few years their senior, also reported retirement and were kept in that classification.

The categories of disabled or retired are presented together in Tables 7 to 10. Tests to measure the statistical significance of the relationship between work status and another characteristic of the woman or her household are made with this category excluded; that is, only those women who were free to choose whether or not to work were considered when relationships between work status and other variables were tested. Statistical tests shown with the tables that cover the full sample of 838 women include the disabled-retired category. The differences between the two sets of tests tend to reflect the influence of retirement, disability, and aging upon the employment of women.

## Work Status and Personal Characteristics

### Age and Work Status

Both nationally and in rural low-income areas, the employment rate is relatively high in the younger and middle ages, but very low for the elderly. For example, only 3 percent of the elderly rural women were gainfully employed sometime during

1966. At the upper end of the age range, age is significant because of its relation to physical decline. When age is related to work status of the full sample of 838 women and the three categories (employed, homemaking, and disabled or retired) a very strong relationship is indicated (P less thar. .001 for both 1960 and 1966). When work status is based on the two categories of employed and homemaking (not retired or disabled), the indicated relationship with age of the women could be due to chance (P more than .05) When the dual categories are used, those 65 years and older are virtually eliminated (few employed, none classified as homemaking), and this has the effect of reducing the apparent influ-

**Table 7. Work Status of Women in Relation to Their Personal Characteristics, 1966 and 1960[1]**

| Characteristic of women | Employed | | Homemaking | | Disabled or retired | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1966 | 1960 | 1966 | 1960 | 1966 | 1960 |
| | *Percent* | | | | | |
| (a) Race (N816, N828)[2] | | | | | | |
| White | 27 | 28 | 47 | 57 | 26 | 15 |
| Nonwhite | 31 | 38 | 46 | 52 | 23 | 10 |
| (b) Years of age (N812, N822) | | | | | | |
| Under 45 | 43 | 37 | 57 | 63 | 0 | 0 |
| 45 to 54 | 33 | 33 | 63 | 61 | 4 | 6 |
| 55 to 64 | 23 | 21 | 57 | 65 | 20 | 14 |
| 65 and over | 3 | 18 | 0 | 0 | 97 | 82 |
| (c) School grades completed (N807, N815) | | | | | | |
| Less than 5 | 14 | 27 | 40 | 51 | 46 | 22 |
| 5 to 7 | 23 | 28 | 44 | 54 | 33 | 18 |
| 8 | 24 | 22 | 49 | 63 | 27 | 15 |
| 9 to 11 | 37 | 33 | 52 | 59 | 11 | 8 |
| 12 or more | 39 | 46 | 52 | 46 | 9 | 3 |
| (d) Status in family (N817, N828)[3] | | | | | | |
| Homemaker, husband present | 28 | 29 | 56 | 61 | 16 | 10 |
| Head, widowed | 21 | 36 | 15 | 26 | 64 | 38 |
| Head, other | 53 | 65 | 28 | 26 | 19 | 9 |

[1] Chi square tests were run to determine the statistical significance of distribution among the cells of subunits of Tables 7 to 10.

The probability of getting the computed chi square from a universe of no association in the units of the above table is as follows:

Full distribution in each unit of the table:
Less than 1 percent: 1966: b, c, d; 1960: b, c, d
Less than 5, more than 1 percent: 1960: a
5 percent or more (not statistically significant): 1966: a

Characteristic with employed and homemaking:
Less than 1 percent: 1966: d; 1960: c, d
Less than 5, more than 1 percent: 1960: a
5 percent or more: 1966: a, b, c; 1960: b

[2] For Tables 7, 9, and 10 the percents are based on reported cases of the 838 sample. The first number applies to 1966, the second to 1960. Work status is reported for 817 women in 1966 and 829 in 1960. The N shown in the tables is further reduced by not-reported cases of the independent variables. The chi squares of employed-homemaking coverage are based on 611 for 1966 and 718 for 1960.

[3] Five percent at both years were divorced, separated, or never married. The few homemakers who were not the wife of the male head are not shown in the table but are discussed in the text.

ence of age while the relation of other variables to employment is revealed more clearly.

Age was correlated inversely with employment during both years covered by the survey. It was more pronounced for 1966 than 1960, and still present when ages 65 and over and the disabled or retired under 65 were excluded. The quinquennial ages below 40 in 1960 and 45 in 1966 did not vary consistently with rates of employment. Of the ages 40 to 65 in 1960 and 45 to 65 in 1966 the correlation is uniform for 1966 and pronounced for both years of the survey.

It has been shown that age was an extremely significant variable for the 838 women. It is known that age is highly related to education, family status, residence, economic status, and almost all characteristics henceforth considered.

**Race**

Generally, nonwhite women have a significantly higher employment rate than whites, a phenomenon generally associated with the fact that economic responsibility for maintaining a family often falls more heavily on non-white than on white women.[20]

Within the study population, nonwhite women had higher rates of employment at each date (Table 7). However, when measured by chi square, the 1960 difference is shown to be significant (P less than .05), while the 1966 difference could have occurred by chance as easily as one time in every three. The small difference between the work rates of white and nonwhite women can be explained in part by the similarity of their socioeconomic background in these rural and low-income areas and by the limited employment opportunities.

**Education**

Nationally, the higher a woman's educational attainment, the greater the probability that she will be in the labor force. The only deviation in this pattern is for those starting but not finishing college.[21] Such women often are married to educated men whose social status prevents the women from occupying the type of jobs for which they are educationally prepared.

Table 7 shows that the same uniformly increasing rate of employment exists for women in rural low-income areas, as well. A more detailed cross-tabulation of education and work status

[20] U. S. Department of Labor, "Negro Women in the Population and in the Labor Force," Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., 1968.
[21] "1965 Handbook on Women Workers," op. cit., p. 25.

0027

reveals that college "quitters" in the study population in 1966 deviate as in the national pattern; that is, they reverse the otherwise consistent trend. In 1960, however, the deviant educational group was those who completed only the eighth grade; no explanation for this pattern is apparent.

While employed women generally were more educated, the disabled and/or retired generally had less formal education. Median educational attainment in 1960 and 1966 was 8 years of schooling for all 838 women, as well as for all homemaking. The median for those working was 9 years, and for those disabled or retired was 7. This is explicable in that most elderly Americans completed their formal schooling before high school educational attainment was so common. (In the nation, the median for women of age 65 in 1960 was 8 years, compared to 12 years for all American women.[22])

When the influence of disability and retirement is eliminated, education was found to be significantly related to work status in 1960; in 1966, whether or not a woman worked was more related to her family status and to characteristics of her husband and her family.

**Family Status**

In general, 2 out of every 3 women who were heads of the household and able to work were employed in the rural, low-income areas studied, in both years. In contrast, only 1 out of each 3 wives was working. This generalization is in agreement with the national pattern.[23]

Two-thirds of all able-bodied women who had never been married and of divorced or separated women were employed. Widows had lower employment rates than other women without marriage partners. The probability that a deceased spouse provided more adequate economic resources for the woman than an estranged spouse provided may, in part, account for this difference. Widows, in both the study population and the nation generally, are also considerably older and less able to work than are other women. This explains in part why widows had a lower employment rate than wives in 1966. When the comparison is limited to those who were able to work, the labor force participation rate of widows again was intermediate between the rates for married women and those of other marital status.

[22] U. S. Department of Labor, "Trends in Educational Attainment of Women," Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., 1969.
[23] "1965 Handbook on Women Workers," op. cit., p. 25.

## Wife's Work Status and Husband's Characteristics

### Husband's Education

Katelman and Barnett[24] reported that husband's educational attainment was not only related to wife's work status, but was even more significantly related to her work status than was her own educational attainment. Katelman and Barnett studied middle-class urban women. The present study lends both support and contradiction to the findings of Katelman and Barnett (Table 8). For 1966, the wife's work status was related to her husband's education at the .01 level of significance, but was not related to her own education at even the .05 level. However, the relationship of the variables in the 1960 sample contradict Katelman and Barnett on both counts; i.e., the relationship between husband's education and wife's employment could have occurred by chance somewhat more easily than once out of every five chances.

### Husband's Ability to Work

The wife's work status varied sharply according to the husband's work status. In either year, wives of men who were fully able to work were most apt to be in the labor force. However, the relationship between husband's ability to work and wife's work status was almost entirely attributable to the relationship between the retirement or disability of the husband and retirement or disability of the wife (Table 8 and footnote 1).

### Husband's Work Status

Similarly, wives were more apt to work if their husbands were working, but again there was no significant relationship between the two variables when only women who were able to work are considered.

### Husband's Occupation

The husband's occupation has a highly significant relationship to the work status of the wife in rural low-income areas, which is not eliminated by controlling for differences in disability or retirement of the wife.

Employment was highest and lowest for wives of men in white collar work and in agriculture, respectively. About half of the wives of professionals and proprietors worked, but few of the wives of salesmen or male clerical workers were employed.

[24] D. K. Katelman and L. D. Barnett, "Work Orientation of Urban, Middle-Class Married Women," Jour. Marriage and the Family, Vol. 30, Feb., 1968, pp. 80-88.

**Table 8. Work Status of Women in Relation to Educational and Work Characteristics of Husbands, 1966 and 1960[1]**

| Characteristic of husband | Employed | | Homemaking | | Disabled or retired | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1966 | 1960 | 1966 | 1960 | 1966 | 1960 |
| | | | *Percent* | | | |
| (a) School grade completed (N590, N671)[2] | | | | | | |
| Less than 5 | 16 | 26 | 59 | 58 | 25 | 16 |
| 5 to 7 | 23 | 24 | 59 | 63 | 18 | 13 |
| 8 | 32 | 29 | 50 | 62 | 18 | 9 |
| 9 to 11 | 39 | 33 | 52 | 62 | 9 | 5 |
| 12 or more | 37 | 38 | 59 | 57 | 4 | 5 |
| (b) Ability to work (N617, N640) | | | | | | |
| Fully able | 33 | 31 | 64 | 66 | 3 | 3 |
| Limited disability | 25 | 30 | 53 | 62 | 22 | 8 |
| Disabled or retired | 14 | 19 | 34 | 32 | 52 | 49 |
| (c) Work status (N579, N627) | | | | | | |
| Employed | 32 | 30 | 61 | 66 | 7 | 4 |
| Not employed | 14 | 23 | 36 | 35 | 50 | 42 |
| (d) Occupation group (N440, N618) | | | | | | |
| White collar[3] | 57 | 41 | 36 | 49 | 7 | 10 |
| Operatives or craftsmen | 26 | 32 | 72 | 64 | 2 | 4 |
| Laborers, except farm | 42 | 29 | 58 | 63 | 0 | 8 |
| Farm operators | 21 | 21 | 64 | 67 | 15 | 12 |
| Farm laborers | 41 | 55 | 52 | 37 | 7 | 8 |

[1] The probability of getting the computed chi square from a universe of no association in the units of the above table is as follows:

Full distribution in each unit of the table:
Less than 1 percent: 1966: a, b, c, d; 1960: b, c, d
Less than 5, more than 1 percent: 1960: a
5 percent or more (not statistically significant): None

Characteristic with employed and homemaking:
Less than 1 percent: 1966: a, d; 1960: d
Less than 5, more than 1 percent: None
More than 5 percent: 1966: b, c; 1960: a, b, c

[2] The base numbers for women with a husband and with work status reported are 325 for 1966 and 694 for 1960.

[3] Includes proprietors, professional, technical, sales, and clerical workers.

Again, about half of the wives of farm laborers worked, yet few wives of farmers were wage or salary employees. The low employment rate for farmers' wives is partially due to their higher rate of retirement or disability, but even when the analysis is confined to able women, farmers' wives still had the lowest of the employment rates.

## Work Status and Household Characteristics

### Type of Family

Because of the high correlation between marital status and type of family, one would expect type of family to be significantly related to work status, just as marital position was. Table 9 indicates that very few women in broken homes consider that their

0030

ability to work is fully absorbed with homemaking; such women were more often either working or were disabled or retired. Of the intact families, no simple relationship existed between work status and whether or not there were household members beyond the nuclear family. Employment for women was higher in 1960 for those residing in simple nuclear families, but higher in 1966 for those in complex, intact families.

## Family Life Cycle

When all women were included in the distribution—irrespective of age, disability, or retirement—the stages of the life cycle were correlative of employment of women in both 1960 and 1966. As the stages advanced, fewer of the women were employed. It

**Table 9. Work Status of Women in Relation to Household Characteristics, 1966 and 1960[1]**

| Characteristic of household | Employed | | Homemaking | | Disabled or retired | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1966 | 1960 | 1966 | 1960 | 1966 | 1960 |
| | | | *Percent* | | | |
| (a) Type of family (N814, N829)[2] | | | | | | |
| Intact | | | | | | |
| Simple | 28 | 30 | 56 | 60 | 16 | 10 |
| Complex | 30 | 24 | 51 | 65 | 19 | 11 |
| Broken | 26 | 42 | 19 | 29 | 55 | 29 |
| (b) Stage in family life cycle (N812, N826) | | | | | | |
| With children, age: | | | | | | |
| Under 10 years | 28 | 39 | 70 | 60 | 2 | 1 |
| 10 to 17 years | 37 | 34 | 59 | 62 | 4 | 4 |
| 18 and over | 30 | 29 | 52 | 59 | 18 | 12 |
| Without children, head age: | | | | | | |
| Under 60 years | 59 | 39 | 56 | 58 | 5 | 3 |
| 60 years and over | 11 | 15 | 20 | 32 | 69 | 53 |
| (c) Persons in household (N814, N829) | | | | | | |
| 1 or 2 | 22 | 28 | 33 | 44 | 45 | 28 |
| 3 or 4 | 31 | 34 | 55 | 55 | 14 | 11 |
| 5 or 6 | 31 | 31 | 59 | 64 | 10 | 5 |
| 7 or more | 34 | 30 | 64 | 67 | 2 | 3 |
| (d) Ratio of dependent to supporting members (N809, N822) | | | | | | |
| 0.5 or less | 31 | 31 | 58 | 63 | 11 | 6 |
| 0.6 to 1.0 | 30 | 36 | 50 | 53 | 20 | 11 |
| More than 1.0 | 19 | 26 | 29 | 45 | 52 | 29 |
| (e) Place of residence (N768, N815) | | | | | | |
| Farm | 26 | 27 | 55 | 63 | 19 | 10 |
| Non-farm | 30 | 35 | 43 | 47 | 27 | 18 |

[1] The probability of getting the computed chi square from a universe of no association in the units of the above table is as follows:

Full distribution in each unit of the table:
Less than 1 percent: 1966 and 1960: all

Characteristic with employed and homemaking:
Less than 1 percent: 1966: a; 1960: a,e
Less than 5, more than 1 percent: 1966: e
More than 5 percent: 1966: b,c,d; 1960: b,c,d

[2] See footnote 2, Table 7.

0031

is obvious that age was closely interwoven with stages, and that, in the full distribution, age of women was reflected as well as advance in the stages of the family life cycle.

When the effect of age was controlled (all 65 years or older eliminated as retired or disabled except the few employed) the stages were not significantly related statistically to the women's employment (P more than .05). However, stages in the classification shown in Table 9 are based on age of oldest child, and students of female employment have determined that child bearing and the presence of young (preschool) children are the predominant factors keeping women in this country in the labor force. Thus age of the first child is not so decisive a factor for a mother's work status as age of the last child, which was not available for analysis.

**Number in Household**

It might seem reasonable to expect that as the number of individuals in the home for whom the woman must wash, iron, mend, mop, dust, cook, etc. increases, the time available for other activities such as paid employment would decrease. However, in some cases, part of these chores can be adequately done by other, even younger, members of the larger households. This, in part, explains why household size did not vary more strongly or more systematically with work status. Other relationships were the correlation between family size and dependency ratio, and between socioeconomic status and family size, each of which will be considered separately.

**Ratio of Dependent to Supporting Members**

The ratio of the number of persons of the ages 15 to 64 to the number of persons less than 15 and older than 64 proved to be highly related to a wide variety of social, occupational, and income characteristics of the households. The usual dependency ratio was modified so that this index could be applied to the individual household. Cleland reported that when most of the household members are in the working range, the rural low-income household should be capable of rapid adjustment to changing circumstances.[25] Dependency was heaviest when the household was large, when it was small and aged, or when it was a broken family.

Cleland reported that for the 7-state 1960 sample of rural low-income households, female employment was strongest for the

[25] C. L. Cleland, "Two Indexes for Rural Households: Dependency and Capability-to-Work," revision of paper presented at Southern Sociological Society, 1963.

middle values of the index, with women in households at either extreme of the scale less apt to be employed.

Such a pattern may be noted in Table 9 for the 1960 data, but it is not apparent for the 1966 data. Indeed, in 1966, households with intermediate and low dependency had about equal proportions of employed women. The relationship between dependency and work status was not significant (as measured by chi square) at either date.

### Place of Residence

Women's labor force participation depends very much on where they live. Urban women are more likely to be labor force participants than are rural women. And of the rural women, those who reside on farms are considerably less likely to be gainfully employed than those who do not reside on farms. In the nation, in 1960, 37.3 percent of the urban, contrasted with 28.8 percent of the rural nonfarm, and 22.9 percent of the rural farm female population were in the labor force.[26]

The relationship between type of residence and work status existed in these low-income areas as well as for the nation (Table 9), particularly in 1960. Part of the relationship between percent employed and residence resulted from differences in rate of retirement and/or disability. However, even when those differences are controlled, the relationship between residence and work status still existed.

## Woman's Employment and Socioeconomic Status of Family

### Number of Persons Employed

One dimension of the relationship between economic need and female employment is tapped by the number of persons employed in the household. This number was significantly related to work status in 1966 (Table 10). Women were most likely to be employed in homes with multiple workers, especially households with two workers, or with four or more workers.

### Family Income, Women Employment, and Earnings

The earnings of the rural women, apart from household incomes, were not reported for 1966. However, the 1960 data for employment, woman earnings, and household income reveal sev-

[26] U. S. Bureau of the Census, "1960 Census of Population," op. cit., 1962, Table 82, p. 213.

eral important tendencies. As household income increased, the earnings contribution of rural women not only increased in aggregate but as a proportion of total household income. As household income increased, the relative number of employable women (not disabled or retired) who engaged in wage or salaried employment tended to increase.

Among the very poor, households with income under $500 in 1960, 20 percent of the women were employed; of the upper income of $4,000 or more, 47 percent of the women considered eligible for work were employed. The relationship was not uniform between the extreme categories; of 21 possibilities that each income category would be higher in woman employment than preceding categories, 15 conformed. The statistical probability,

**Table 10. Work Status of Women in Relation to the Employment of Family Members and Socioeconomic Status of Family, 1966 and 1960[1]**

| Item | Employed | | Homemaking | | Disabled or retired | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1966 | 1960 | 1966 | 1960 | 1966 | 1960 |
| | | | *Percent* | | | |
| (a) Persons employed in household (N799)[2] | | | | | | |
| None | 0 | .... | 30 | .... | 70 | .... |
| 1 | 16 | .... | 72 | .... | 12 | .... |
| 2 | 72 | .... | 22 | .... | 6 | .... |
| 3 or more | 53 | .... | 42 | .... | 5 | .... |
| (b) Family income (N724, N807)[2] | | | | | | |
| Less than $1,000 | 22 | 23 | 37 | 56 | 41 | 21 |
| $1,000 to $1,999 | 16 | 25 | 41 | 59 | 43 | 16 |
| $2,000 to $3,999 | 30 | 37 | 54 | 55 | 16 | 8 |
| $4,000 and over | 42 | 45 | 54 | 52 | 4 | 3 |
| (c) Material level of living scale score (N811, N827) | | | | | | |
| 0 or 1 | 19 | 32 | 41 | 54 | 40 | 14 |
| 2, 3, or 4 | 26 | 27 | 51 | 59 | 23 | 14 |
| 5 or 6 | 31 | 35 | 47 | 53 | 22 | 12 |
| (d) Communication level of living scale score (N811, N827) | | | | | | |
| 0 or 1 | 21 | 31 | 23 | 47 | 56 | 22 |
| 2 or 3 | 27 | 28 | 53 | 62 | 20 | 10 |
| 4, 5, or 6 | 31 | 40 | 48 | 47 | 21 | 13 |

[1] The probability of getting the computed chi square from a universe of no association in the units of the above table is as follows:

Full distribution in each unit of the table:
Less than 1 percent: 1966: all; 1960: b, d (a not reported)
Less than 5, more than 1 percent: None
More than 5 percent: 1960: c

Characteristic with employed and homemaking:
Less than 1 percent: 1966: a, b
Less than 5, more than 1 percent: None
More than 5 percent: 1966: c, d; 1960: a, b, c, d

[2] Not reported for 1960.

[3] See footnote 2, Table 7.

however, is less than 5 percent, with 66 degrees of freedom, that chance could have accounted for the indicated relationship.

The median earnings during 1960 of employed women in households with $500 to $1,000 net income comprised 35 percent of the median income of these households. The percentage rose to 64 in households with income from $2,000 to $4,000, and is estimated to have remained about the same for households of $4,000 and over, where the median earning of women during the year was $2,450. As household income rose the aggregate and percentage contribution increased. The only exceptional class was the extremely poor, households of less than $500, where rural women who were employed earned practically all of the meager income of the households to which they belonged.

It is remarkable that the income of households in which there was a gainfully employed woman (median of $2,373) was $945 higher than in households where the homemaker was not employed, a figure that is almost identical with the earnings of employed women, $950. In other words the difference in the income distribution of the two sets of households is mainly the employment of women. The median income of the remaining households, those with a disabled or retired woman, mainly aged over 65 years, was $965.

While employed women in the rural low-income sample contributed 40 percent of their family's total income, the earnings of the employed female head accounted for three-fourths of her family's total income ($610 out of $896). This suggests that some types of female employment are clearly related to economic necessity, particularly in households in which there is no male head.

Although the median total family income for all families increased about 20 percent during the 6 years (after adjusting for inflation), the households headed by women did not experience sufficient increase in total family income to offset the rise in inflation—that is, they did not even "hold their own."

**Level of Living Indices**

The confounding influence of female earnings on economic measures is again evident in the cross-tabulations between work status and level-of-living scale scores (Table 10). As with family income, there was some tendency toward a curvilinear relationship. In those homes with the fewest level of living items (whether material items or communication items) and in those with the most such items, women were more apt to be working in 1960. However, in 1966 the relationship between level-of-living scale

0035

scores and female employment increased uniformly. But at neither date was the relationship between work status and either level-of-living scale significant if differences in retirement and disability were held constant.

## OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYED WOMEN AS RELATED TO PERSONAL AND HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

A brief description of the labor force composition of broader areas makes the contrast and uniqueness of the female occupational structure in rural low-income areas more apparent. This section also analyzes characteristics of these rural women as they are associated with the unique occupational pattern which exists, and the consistency in the association of these characteristics to change in the occupational pattern.

### Occupational Composition

Labor force composition varies according to the population that provides the workers. For example, women dominate over men in domestic and secretarial positions, while men dominate in jobs related to agriculture and physical labor. In like manner, the rural labor force contains a disproportionate number of operatives, domestics, and agricultural workers, while urban labor markets draw large percentages of white collar workers and of service workers outside private households.

Table 1 highlighted these generalizations in comparing the female labor force composition in the nation, the 4 states studied, the 17-county area from which the sample was drawn, and the study population. Areas that are both rural and low-income appear to contain a unique labor force, with far fewer white collar positions and a large percentage of female laborers, both farm and nonfarm.

The changes going on throughout society, such as those based on technological advancement and changing mores, have affected the rural labor force composition. During the 1960's there was a sizable decrease in the number and percentage of female farmers, farm managers, laborers, and foremen, and in women engaged in domestic and service work. Increases were sharp in women employed as craftsmen (or foremen), as operatives, and as white collar workers (including clerical).[27]

[27] Donald J. Bogue, Principles of Demography, Wiley and Sons, New York, 1969, pp. 260-289.

**Table 11. Distribution of Employed Women by Occupation Group, and Net Occupational Mobility, 1960 to 1966**

| Occupation group | Persons employed 1966 | | Persons employed 1960 | | Weightings[1] | Index scores 1966 | Index scores 1960 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Number* | *Percent* | *Number* | *Percent* | | *Number* | |
| Proprietors, professional, or technical workers | 28 | 12.3 | 21 | 8.2 | 29 | 357 | 238 |
| Sales or clerical | 26 | 11.5 | 24 | 9.3 | 21 | 242 | 195 |
| Craftsmen or foremen | 15 | 6.6 | 3 | 1.2 | 24 | 158 | 29 |
| Operatives | 64 | 28.2 | 64 | 24.9 | 19 | 536 | 473 |
| Domestic or service | 37 | 16.3 | 53 | 20.6 | 7 | 114 | 144 |
| Laborers, except farm | 15 | 6.6 | 18 | 7.0 | 11 | 73 | 77 |
| Farmers | 2 | 0.9 | 21 | 8.2 | 6 | 5 | 99 |
| Farm laborers | 40 | 17.6 | 53 | 20.6 | 5 | 88 | 103 |
| All employed women | 227 | 100.0 | 257 | 100.0 | | 1,573 | 1,308 |

Net mobility index score increase: By number, 265; By percent, 20.3.

[1] Weighting used is the approximate median earnings of women, in $100 rounded, in four states of the sample, 1960.

To better assess the pattern of change characterizing the female labor force in these rural low-income areas, a set of weighted indices was constructed for the occupational groupings. The approximate median earnings of women for each occupational grouping in the 4 states were combined with the percentage of the employed women interviewed who were doing that type work. A comparison of the occupational status scores for 1960 and 1966 produces some evidence that the employment of women within the sample population has shifted toward occupations that carry higher remuneration and prestige in our society.

The occupational changes reported in Table 11 are largely changes within the same sub-group; that is, most of the women who worked were employed at both interview dates. However, one must be careful in assessing the permanency of these occupational changes. Although women's dedication to work is wide and general, their commitment to occupation is more spurious and fleeting.[28] For example, none of the women in the study population who were working as craftsmen and foremen in 1960 were employed in this occupational group in 1966. Only about half of the women employed in clerical and sales positions, or working as farm laborers and foremen, had been in positions of the same type in 1960.

[28] Lee Taylor, Occupational Sociology, Oxford Univ. Press, New York, 1968, p. 471.

## Occupation and Personal Characteristics of Women

### Race

Throughout the nation, more than half of all employed nonwhite women work as domestic and service workers.[29] In general, Negro men, as well as women, tend to be overrepresented in occupations that are uncomfortable, dangerous, poorly paid, and otherwise undesirable. Part of the uniqueness of the Negro occupational structure is attributable to inferior educational opportunity and attainment. Yet it is also attributable to discrimination in the allocation of jobs between the races.[30]

While there was almost no change between 1960 and 1966 in the educational attainment of the women interviewed, shifts in the occupational structure by race are evident (Table 12). In 1960 nearly two-thirds of all Negro women interviewed stated that if they were working, it was in agriculturally-related jobs, usually as a laborer. At that time all remaining employed Negro women were service workers or nonfarm laborers. By 1966 the percentage of women in agricultural occupations had dropped to just over half, and a very small sprinkling of Negro women were working in white collar jobs or as craftsmen or operatives. Racial differences in occupational distribution were significant in 1966 as in 1960.

### Age

Extremely young workers of either sex are concentrated in specific occupations.[31] The same may be said of elderly workers. This pattern characterizes both the national labor force, and that within rural low-income areas (Table 12). At either date of interview, younger workers (less than 40 years) were disproportionately clustered in the positions of craftsmen and operatives, while older workers (50 years and over) were concentrated in agriculture. Age differences in 1960 were statistically significant. In 1966, when the aging of the sample had left fewer and less distinctive young adults and many of the elderly women engaged in agriculture had retired, age and occupational structure were no longer significantly related.

### Education

A decisive factor in the occupational composition of a population is their educational attainment. Within the rural low-income

[29] U. S. Department of Labor, "Negro Women in the Population and in the Labor Force," Government Printing Office, Washington, 1967; see particularly pp. 8-9 and Tables 20-21 (pp. 36-37).
[30] Bogue, op. cit., p. 291.
[31] "1965 Handbook on Women Workers," op. cit., pp. 102-105.

**Table 12. Occupation of Women in Relation to Their Personal Characteristics, 1966 and 1960**

| Personal characteristic | White collar | | Craftsmen, operatives | | Service, laborers except farm | | Farmers, farm laborers | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1966 | 1960 | 1966 | 1960 | 1966 | 1960 | 1966 | 1960 |
| | *Percent* | | | | | | | |
| Race (N227**, N257**)[1] | | | | | | | | |
| White | 33 | 26 | 49 | 39 | 15 | 23 | 3 | 12 |
| Nonwhite | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 41 | 38 | 56 | 62 |
| Years of age (N226, N255**) | | | | | | | | |
| Less than 40 | 25 | 19 | 47 | 35 | 17 | 29 | 11 | 17 |
| 40 to 49 | 23 | 16 | 31 | 22 | 29 | 34 | 17 | 28 |
| 50 and over | 25 | 17 | 28 | 17 | 23 | 22 | 24 | 44 |
| School grades completed (N224**, N255**) | | | | | | | | |
| Less than 8 | 3 | 4 | 19 | 11 | 31 | 29 | 47 | 56 |
| 8 | 8 | 3 | 54 | 51 | 23 | 23 | 15 | 23 |
| 9 to 11 | 22 | 17 | 51 | 37 | 22 | 31 | 5 | 15 |
| 12 and over | 63 | 46 | 24 | 24 | 13 | 27 | 0 | 3 |
| Status in family (N226, N256**)[2] | | | | | | | | |
| Homemaker, husband present | 25 | 20 | 38 | 30 | 21 | 30 | 16 | 20 |
| Head, widowed | 24 | 6 | 24 | 9 | 24 | 12 | 28 | 73 |
| Head, other | 11 | 9 | 26 | 9 | 42 | 36 | 21 | 46 |

[1] a. For Tables 12, 14, and 15 the percents are based on the 227 women employed in 1966 and 257 employed in 1960. The difference between these and the lesser figure for N represents not reported cases in each independent variable.

b. Chi square tests were run for Tables 12 to 15 to determine the extent to which the observed occupation distribution among the cells exceeded the expected. In these tables, the double asterisks present the probability of getting the computed chi square from a universe of no association as less than 1 percent (**$P < .01$); one asterisk, less than 5 percent (*$P < .05$). No asterisk means that the probability of no association is 5 percent or more.

[2] Marital status is not listed for the few homemakers who were not the wife of the male head.

areas studied, occupations requiring a high degree of technical training or responsibility were under-represented, and in all occupational groups that depend more on "brawn than brain"—even though those occupations may often be considered unfit types of work for women—there was an over-representation (Table 12).

All of the employed women who had never had any formal schooling were working either as domestic or service workers, or as farm laborers or foremen. At the other extreme of educational attainment in the sample, all employed college graduates were in the white collar occupations with the exception of one woman employed as an operative in 1960.

### Status in Family

Taylor has observed that, with two exceptions, marital status makes little differential impact on the category of occupations

0039

in which women work.[32] These two exceptions, however, are sharp ones: (a) few single women in the nation work as operatives; these positions, which often require little or no previous work experience and normally pay relatively well, attract a disproportionate number of the married women. (b) Few married women are employed in private households; such work is often intermittent or part-time, has low "prestige" reward, and is generally done by women with great financial need who have few or no other occupational choices available. The U. S. Department of Labor has noted these same (and other smaller) variations in occupation by marital status.[33]

The above generalization must be altered somewhat to meet the unique composition of rural low-income populations. A higher representation of Negro women and of poorly educated women and increased economic need all affect the interrelationship between marital status and occupational distribution. For example, in 1960 there were 23 families with total earnings of less than $2,000 within which the woman worked as a domestic or other service worker; 15 of these 23 women were married. Half of the women in such poor families who worked as nonfarm laborers were married. In such situations, economic necessity can be as imperative a force toward employment for married women as it is for women who are heads of households.

Occupational distribution was more significantly related to marital and family status in 1960 than in 1966. At the latter date, widowed heads appeared almost randomly distributed among the various job groupings, although homemakers were still distributed unevenly within the job possibilities (Table 12). This means that sharp net change occurred among occupation groups during the 6 years. Craftsmen, operatives, and white collar workers among widowed heads increased from 15 percent to 48 percent, and among homemakers, from 50 percent to 63 percent. The counter declines occurred mainly from women farmers of 1960.

## Wife's Occupation and Husband's Characteristics

### Husband's Education

The highly significant relationship between wife's occupation and husband's education (Table 13) is in part attributable to the correlation between his education and his earnings. The reason for working is more related to need for some occupations than for others. For example, a professionally trained woman is apt

[32] Taylor, op. cit., pp. 468-469.
[33] "1965 Handbook on Women Workers," op. cit., pp. 98-100.

0040

**Table 13. Occupation of Women in Relation to Educational and Work Characteristics of Husband, 1966 and 1960**

| Characteristics of husband | White collar | | Craftsmen, operatives | | Service, laborers except farm | | Farmers, farm laborers | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1966 | 1960 | 1966 | 1960 | 1966 | 1960 | 1966 | 1960 |
| | *Percent* | | | | | | | |
| School years completed (N168**, N189**)[1] | | | | | | | | |
| Less than 8 | 3 | 9 | 35 | 21 | 30 | 32 | 32 | 38 |
| 8 | 26 | 21 | 50 | 47 | 15 | 24 | 9 | 8 |
| 9 to 11 | 37 | 36 | 38 | 33 | 17 | 28 | 8 | 3 |
| 12 or more | 53 | 41 | 34 | 34 | 10 | 19 | 3 | 6 |
| Ability to work (N171, N200) | | | | | | | | |
| Fully able | 25 | 21 | 41 | 33 | 17 | 26 | 17 | 20 |
| Limited disability | 29 | 32 | 43 | 23 | 21 | 36 | 7 | 9 |
| Disabled or retired | 31 | 18 | 16 | 18 | 37 | 29 | 16 | 35 |
| Work status (N160**, N196) | | | | | | | | |
| Employed | 26 | 22 | 39 | 32 | 17 | 26 | 18 | 20 |
| Not employed | 21 | 19 | 21 | 19 | 53 | 33 | 5 | 29 |
| Occupation group (N174**, N200**) | | | | | | | | |
| White collar | 63 | 52 | 30 | 33 | 7 | 10 | 0 | 5 |
| Craftsmen, operatives | 15 | 23 | 72 | 41 | 13 | 29 | 0 | 7 |
| Laborers, except farm | 10 | 7 | 35 | 36 | 30 | 50 | 25 | 7 |
| Farm operators | 32 | 25 | 36 | 30 | 14 | 28 | 18 | 17 |
| Farm laborers | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 23 | 22 | 73 | 78 |
| No information[2] | 23 | 14 | 31 | 57 | 40 | 29 | 6 | 0 |

[1] a. The base number of employed women with a husband is 174 for 1966 and 200 for 1960.

b. See Footnote 1b, Table 12.

[2] No occupational information was reported for 35 husbands in 1966, and 8 husbands in 1960.

to be "attracted" to employment irrespective of her husband's ability to support the family, while a woman whose skills limit her to work as a domestic or a farm laborer may only work if her family has to have more income. As Table 13 indicates, women employed as farm laborers were almost all married to men of low educational attainment.

Another important explanation for the significance of the relationship between wife's occupation and husband's education is related to the selection process in courtship. Poorly educated men are most apt to marry poorly educated women, who in turn can only qualify for unskilled jobs. Conversely, well educated women, who qualify for professional jobs, usually have well educated husbands.

### Husband's Ability To Work

Under a situation of increased need, and with low educational levels, the husband's physical ability to work may not be enough to assure that he can earn enough to support his family. Therefore, the element of choice which might exist disproportionately

0041

for the wives of healthy men in a less deprived area is somewhat thwarted. The variability between wife's occupation and husband's health, in 1966 as in 1960, was not significant, nor was it even uniform (Table 13).

**Husband's Work Status**

In 1966, the occupational distribution for the wives of employed men very closely approximated the occupational distribution of all women interviewed, while the wives of men who were not employed were disproportionately skewed toward the unskilled occupations (Table 13). For the latter group it may be they were not so much drawn by the attractiveness of the job as they were pushed by the economic needs of their family. Yet the pattern was not so distinctive for these families in 1960. Why is it that in 1960 women's work status was related to marital status but not to husband's employment status, while in 1966, women's occupations were not significantly related to marital status, but a married woman's occupation was related to her husband's employment status? Being a female head or being married to someone unemployed both appear to be conditions that would push women to accept whatever occupations were possible, while other women could choose whether or not to work. Yet, neither operated uniformly over the time period, nor did the two concur in significance to occupation. More research is needed on the pushes and pulls affecting women's entry and departure from the labor force.

**Husband's Occupation**

As with education, a high correlation between the husband's and wife's occupations was expected. Table 13 shows that working wives of white collar men usually were in white collar work, while farm laborers were almost always married to someone with the same occupation if both husband and wife were employed. The few employed wives of farmers were mainly occupying white collar positions. Craftsmen's wives were preponderately in the craft occupations, and employed wives of other-than-farm laborers were principally laborers in farm or nonfarm work and in craft occupations. Further correlation of husband and wife occupations is evident in the change during the 6-year period: employed husbands and wives realized some net movement up the occupational ladder toward better-paying jobs.

Although major occupational grouping is often the same for husband and wife when both work, it should be noted that in rural low-income areas, as in the nation, only about one-fourth

0042

of working couples pursue similar lines of work (when more specific occupational groupings are utilized in the analysis.)[34]

## Occupation and Household Characteristics

### Type of Family

Women in different occupational groupings often live in different types of families. For example, operatives were concentrated in complete nuclear families which contained no other relatives or individuals (this was true for both 1966 and 1960). Broken families were often headed by female farmers in 1960 and by female domestic or service workers in 1966 (Table 14). Intact families with additional household members had an unusual number of wives working as farm laborers in 1960 and an overrepresentation of wives working in white collar jobs in 1966.

The expected distribution of 1960 jobs differed from the observed sufficiently to be statistically significant. Even when intact families were considered separately, occupational distributions differed between simple and complex families to a statistically significant extent. In 1966 occupational differences were not significantly skewed by type of family.

### Stage of Family Life Cycle

The occupational pattern was not as related to household characteristics in 1966 as it was in 1960 (Table 14). It must be remembered that in this study stage of the family cycle was defined by the age of the oldest, rather than the youngest, child.

Women in agriculture were most apt to have only young (under 10) children, or to have completed child-rearing altogether. Yet, women with young children were more disproportionately grouped in jobs as craftsmen and operatives. Families without any children living at home more often had women in white collar work if the head was under 60 years of age.

### Size of Household

The relationship between occupational distribution and size of household was significant at each interview date. White collar workers very rarely came from large family households, whereas farm laborers and foremen, as well as female domestics and service workers, very often were part of large households (Table 14). In 1960, 27 of the 32 working women in homes of 8 or more

[34] "1965 Handbook on Women Workers," op. cit., p. 33.

0043

**Table 14. Occupation of Women in Relation to Household Characteristics, 1966 and 1960**

| Household characteristic | White collar | | Craftsmen, operatives | | Service, laborers except farm | | Farmers, farm laborers | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1966 | 1960 | 1966 | 1960 | 1966 | 1960 | 1966 | 1960 |
| | *Percent* | | | | | | | |
| Type of family (N225, N257**)[1] | | | | | | | | |
| Intact | | | | | | | | |
| Simple | 24 | 23 | 39 | 33 | 21 | 27 | 16 | 17 |
| Complex | 36 | 7 | 32 | 19 | 18 | 42 | 14 | 32 |
| Broken | 20 | 7 | 25 | 9 | 31 | 21 | 24 | 63 |
| Stage of family life cycle (N225*, N257**) | | | | | | | | |
| Children | | | | | | | | |
| Under age 10 | 14 | 19 | 43 | 39 | 14 | 30 | 29 | 12 |
| 10 to 17 | 30 | 14 | 39 | 27 | 23 | 38 | 8 | 21 |
| 18 and over | 14 | 9 | 35 | 22 | 21 | 26 | 30 | 43 |
| Without children | | | | | | | | |
| Head under 60 | 29 | 35 | 31 | 22 | 31 | 18 | 9 | 25 |
| Head 60 and over | 32 | 15 | 27 | 20 | 18 | 20 | 23 | 45 |
| Size of household (N225**, N257**) | | | | | | | | |
| 1 and 2 persons | 27 | 29 | 28 | 24 | 29 | 16 | 16 | 31 |
| 3 and 4 persons | 32 | 20 | 47 | 30 | 14 | 27 | 7 | 23 |
| 5 or more | 15 | 7 | 32 | 23 | 25 | 37 | 28 | 33 |
| Household dependency (N223, N256**) | | | | | | | | |
| Index | | | | | | | | |
| Maximum (0.1-0.9) | 14 | 7 | 26 | 15 | 32 | 31 | 28 | 47 |
| Intermed. (1.0-2.9) | 23 | 17 | 38 | 27 | 23 | 31 | 16 | 25 |
| Minimum (more than 3.0) | 33 | 26 | 35 | 32 | 18 | 20 | 14 | 22 |
| Residence (N215**, N253*) | | | | | | | | |
| Farm | 25 | 24 | 26 | 24 | 15 | 22 | 34 | 30 |
| Nonfarm | 24 | 12 | 39 | 27 | 29 | 33 | 8 | 28 |

[1] See Footnote 1, Table 12.

persons were employed in one or the other of these two types of work; in 1966, 19 of the 27 working women in homes of that size were so employed. Of the women who were working, operatives were most apt to reside in households of average size.

## Household Dependency

Cleland reported a significant relationship between female occupational distribution and household dependency for the larger rural low-income sample in 1960.[35] His findings are supported by the analysis of women in the 4-state area in 1960, but not by the 1966 data. At either date households with maximum dependency were most likely to have women working as nonfarm laborers or in the service (including domestic) industry, while households of minimum dependency had a disproportionate number of craftsmen or operatives (Table 14). Although the patterns are the same for both dates, the extent of skewness is not significant in 1966 as it had been earlier.

[35] C. L. Cleland, op. cit.

0044

**Residence**

The relationship between occupational distribution and residence is one of only two relationships examined in this section that increased in significance between 1960 and 1966. The explanation seems rather straightforward: nonfarm residence contained no urban locations at the earlier date, thus did not differ from rural farm as much as in the follow-up study when some former rural residents were followed to urban locations. This difference in homogeneity of the nonfarm definition is seen throughout the occupational range. The percent employed in agriculture is fairly similar between farm and nonfarm when both pertain only to rural locations, but is extremely different when nonfarm locations include some urban. In white collar occupations, the gap in 1960 between farm and nonfarm was wide when only rural residences were considered (farmers' wives, if they worked, were most apt to be in white collar work), but that distinction disappeared in 1966 when urban white collar opportunities were occasionally included. It follows that migration was significantly related to occupational composition in 1966.

## Occupation and Family Socioeconomic Status

**Total Family Income**

The relationship between female occupational distribution and total family income is more meaningful when related characteristics also are considered. Attention has already been given to the similarity between the occupations of husband and wife, and to occupational differences relating to whether the woman was the sole worker in the home or one of several contributing to the total family income. Marital status and family position were also significantly related to the occupational composition in 1960, although not in 1966. The relationship between total family income and occupational composition is affected by each of these other variables.

The families of employed women with the highest total incomes were those in which the woman was a white collar worker, both in 1966 and in 1960. Very few of these women were female heads; most were in households where there was one additional worker, such as an employed husband. As you will remember, these wives were most apt to have husbands with higher than average educational attainment, and employed as white collar workers or as farmers.

In the families of employed women having at least $5,000 total income, more women were working as craftsmen or opera-

0045

**Table 15. Occupation of Women in Relation to Socioeconomic Status of Household, 1966 and 1960**

| Economic indicator | White collar | | Craftsmen, operatives | | Service, laborers except farm | | Farmers, farm laborers | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1966 | 1960 | 1966 | 1960 | 1966 | 1960 | 1966 | 1960 |
| | | | | *Percent* | | | | |
| Total family income (N227**, N257)[1] | | | | | | | | |
| Less than $1,000 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 3 | 43 | 28 | 46 | 64 |
| $1,000 to $4,999 | 17 | 12 | 37 | 15 | 29 | 23 | 17 | 50 |
| $5,000 and over | 44 | 25 | 44 | 40 | 7 | 23 | 5 | 12 |
| No information | 29 | 25 | 46 | 32 | 8 | 13 | 17 | 30 |
| Material level of living score (N225**, N257**) | | | | | | | | |
| Low (0 to 2) | 8 | 3 | 6 | 14 | 41 | 34 | 45 | 49 |
| Intermediate (3 to 5) | 12 | 22 | 55 | 41 | 22 | 24 | 11 | 13 |
| Very high (6) | 43 | 42 | 41 | 27 | 11 | 20 | 5 | 11 |
| Communication level of living score (N225**, N257**) | | | | | | | | |
| Low (0 to 2) | 7 | 4 | 11 | 12 | 43 | 23 | 39 | 61 |
| Intermediate (3 & 4) | 16 | 11 | 38 | 36 | 25 | 35 | 21 | 18 |
| High (5 & 6) | 39 | 44 | 43 | 25 | 12 | 21 | 6 | 10 |

[1] a. In 1966 income is divided into the following categories: less than $950; $950 to $4,949; $4,950 and over.

b. See Footnote 1, Table 12.

tives in 1960 than in the other three major occupational groupings (Table 15), but both this category and that of white collar workers had similarly disproportionate representation in this income level in 1960. Six years later, there were slight gains in the percent of craftsmen or operatives, and major gains in the percent employed as white collar workers.

Of the families having intermediate incomes ($1,000 to $4,999), women working as craftsmen or operatives again dominated the occupational distribution in 1966. Agricultural workers had a disproportionate number in this income level in 1960.

Agricultural workers also dominated the families of lowest income (less than $1,000) at both dates of interview, but less so in 1966. The grave poverty of the families in which the woman's earnings were from agriculture was in part due to the poor education, elderliness, etc. of the female heads who occupied positions as female farmers. Similar characteristics obtained for female agricultural laborers and foremen, except that they were more often wives than female heads. Indeed half of these very poor households of female farm laborers had no more than $500 total annual income in 1966 when the woman was the only worker. Even the families of agricultural laborers in which there were multiple breadwinners averaged far less than $2,000, in spite of the fact that in one-fifth of such households there were three or more workers in the family.

**Level-of-Living Scale Scores**

Grouping the scale scores into three groups of approximately equal size allows a meaningful comparison of these level-of-living scale scores and occupational distribution (Table 15). Both the scale composed of material items and that composed of communication items had a significant relationship to occupational distribution in both years.

The families of agricultural workers again occupied a disproportionate percent of the households with low scores on either scale, considerably more so for the communication items than for the material items and more so in 1960 than 1966. As with total family income, households with intermediate scores were disproportionately those in which the woman worked as an operative or craftsman. The families in which a woman had a white collar job made up an unusually large percent of all families with high level-of-living scores in 1960, particularly for the score composed of communication items. In 1966 both the families of white collar workers and those of operatives and craftsmen had more than their over-all average percentage among the families with high level-of-living scores.

0047

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This report describes an empirical study into female labor force participation in a particular sub-cultural setting, namely selected rural low-income areas of four southern states. Data were collected as a part of the Southern Regional S-44 and S-61 Projects.

In the 1,295 households initially interviewed in the four states in 1960 there were 1,216 homemakers or female heads. By 1966 the responding women had been reduced to 838. Loss of former female respondents resulted from such factors as death, incapacitation, migration from the area, refusal to be interviewed, and the inability of the interviewer to find the individual at home.

The most extensive loss during the 6 years from the 1,216 samples was due to migration. This out-migration selected proportionately more nonwhites than whites, and more rural nonfarm than farm residents. The 1960 earnings of the migrant women and the material level of living of the household were lower than of the women who remained. In spite of having similar rates of employment, the migrant women were more frequently engaged in wage labor, and less frequently engaged in white collar work than the non-migrants. However, other characteristics were similar, and the effect of migration upon the residual female labor force was largely quantitative.

The 838 women who were respondents to the second round of interviews were the main object of this research undertaking.

The objectives of the research design concerned the study of the women's work status and their occupations in 1960 and again in 1966. The analysis provided insight into which characteristics bore a constant and significant relationship to the work status of the woman, which were not significantly related to work status, and which bore a changing relationship to the work status of the women. Attention was also given to the constant relationships between occupational distribution and certain independent variables, to whether these relationships were significant at both interviews, and to the changing relationships between the occupational distribution and other independent variables.

**Personal characteristics.** Within rural low-income areas, as within the general national population, one of the most important influences on a woman's employment is her position in the family. Her status as a wife or head, and, if the latter, as widowed or otherwise separated from a husband had stronger bearing upon her work status than almost any other characteristic. Her age and physical condition also were highly important in determining

whether the woman was employed. For those women who worked, educational attainment and race had more bearing on occupational choice than did family position. While nonwhites were significantly concentrated in the least desirable occupations at both dates of interview, a very small sprinkling of nonwhite women were doing white collar or "better" types of blue collar work in 1966, in contrast with a total absence of nonwhites in these categories in 1960.

The low educational attainment of the employed women in the sample was an important factor affecting the composition of the labor force. In those occupations requiring a high degree of educational attainment, the study population was underrepresented, and in all occupational groups which depend more on "brawn than brain" the women in the sample population were overrepresented. Those with the poorest schooling were concentrated in service work or in agricultural labor. Of the 16 women who had acquired as much as a bachelor's degree, all but one of those who were working (and few were not) were employed in the white collar occupations.

Fewer personal characteristics were significantly related to work status and to occupation in 1966 than in 1960. Black women and women with the higher educational qualifications were more apt to work at either date, yet the relationship between work status and these characteristics was statistically significant only at the earlier date. Family status and age were more strongly related to occupation in 1966 than in 1960. The decline in the importance of a woman's personal characteristics on her occupation was offset by a rise during the 6 years in the importance of the characteristics of the husband and the entire household.

**Characteristics of the husband.** The husband's socioeconomic characteristics appeared to be related to the wife's labor force pattern in at least three ways: (a) the similarity of the wife's and husband's characteristics which result from the selectivity of marriage; (b) the economic status of the husband and the need for the wife to work; and (c) the attitude of the husband toward his wife's working—his willingness or reluctance for his wife to work.

The husband's occupation bore a constant and significant relationship to both the wife's work status and her occupation. The woman was more apt to be employed if her husband was a white collar worker or a farm laborer, and, if working, she was more apt to be in the same broad occupational category as her husband. On the other hand, a woman was less apt to be working outside the home if she was married to a farmer or a farm man-

0049

ager. Farm wives who did work engaged disproportionately in white-collar jobs.

The husband's educational attainment was related to the wife's occupation, but also the more educated husbands were more likely to have working wives, particularly in 1966. While in 1960 neither the husband's work status nor his ability to work had significant bearing upon whether the wife was employed or on her position on the occupational ladder, his work status was significantly related to her occupation at the time of the final interview.

**Family characteristics.** The type of family to which the woman belonged bore a changing influence on her labor force pattern during the study period. In 1960 women were most apt to be working if they were in broken homes, and if working, were extremely concentrated in agricultural work. In 1966 women in complex nuclear families were the most likely to be employed, and such working women were concentrated in the white collar jobs.

Stage of the family cycle, as tabulated, was unrelated to the fact of woman's employment. But the stages as designated were based on the age of the eldest child present in the home, instead of the age of the youngest child, which most dictates availability of the mother for employment. However, the unrefined stages show the existence of a relationship between family cycle and the occupational group in which the woman was employed, particularly in 1960.

Farm women were less likely to work than nonfarm women throughout the study. The over-all decline in the percentage of women who were employed exists almost totally within the nonfarm sector. Thus, the difference between the labor force participation rate of farm wives and other women decreased considerably between 1960 and 1966. Employed farm wives were least apt to be engaged in service work or nonfarm labor, while these types of jobs were more typical of the working women who did not reside on farms. The migration of some families to urban areas during the 6 years is related to the increasing incidence of white collar work among nonfarm working wives.

Neither the number of persons in the household nor the dependency ratio tended to determine whether the woman was employed. However, household size bore a persistent relationship with occupation: blue collar or wage labor predominated in families of five or more members. Dependence was related to occupation in 1960, but not significantly in 1966.

**Socio-economic status.** Because the measurements of socio-economic status were total family income (including the wife's wages) and family possession of level-of-living items (some purchased with the wife's earnings), it is not surprising that socio-economic status was more solidly related to the wife's occupational level when she was employed than when she remained a homemaker. No exceptions to this persistent pattern of relationship between wife's occupation and socio-economic status were disclosed at either date.

## Conclusions

A considerable amount of change in occupational choice occurred between the two dates, just as there was sizable shifting between the work-nonwork statuses. Changes in the occupational distribution included the shift of farm laborers and foremen from rural nonfarm locations to farm residences, the skewing of wives toward domestic and service occupations in 1960 with the skewing of female heads toward this occupational grouping at the later date; and the change in the type of work done by widows. It must be remembered that female labor force participation is marked by irregularity. Moreover, working is a more constant phenomenon than is the commitment to occupation. Recognition of these facts deters one from making overly strong generalizations about the changes in permanent workers in each occupational group. If the study population had been interviewed in 1964, or again in 1968, the specific women who were employed would have been somewhat different at each of these dates, just as they were between 1960 and 1966. Likewise, the occupational groupings in which each woman was employed would have varied.

The study has described important ways in which the working women in rural low-income areas of the South differ from working women in the nation. They worked more frequently than do rural women in the United States, although less frequently than women in our society generally. They earned less money, had less formal education, were slightly older, and a higher percentage of them were married. Like other rural areas, the labor force had high percentages of operatives, domestics, and agricultural workers, and small percentages of white collar workers. The female labor force in the study areas differed from other rural female labor force patterns in the unusually large percentage of women working in non-farm labor. Deviations from national norms, and from norms in other rural areas, are partially explained in terms of differential cultural participation.

0051

Several similarities between the women's work forces in our society and in the sample must be noted. These include the concentration of married women as operatives, the clustering of elderly workers in agriculture, the relatively high total family income whenever women are employed in white collar positions, and the exceedingly small total family income when the woman's remuneration comes from service and agricultural occupations. The usual acceleration of educational attainment as one progresses up the "occupational ladder" is also evident in the sample population, just as it is in the nation at large.

Over the last 20 years the labor force in the United States has been experiencing a reduction in both number and percent of agricultural workers and, in general, nonfarm unskilled labor has also been decreasing. At the same time, there has been a great acceleration of jobs in the "white-collar" positions. Changes of a similar type were observed occurring in the study population between 1960 and 1966. One example of this was the gain in the occupational status index score between the dates, which indicates that the occupational distribution of women in rural, low-income areas is shifting in a direction which our culture defines as "better" both in terms of remuneration and of prestige.

0052